

R. England D. Commons House
REASONS for Preserving the Publick Market of Blackwell-Hall, and restraining the Levant Company of Merchants from deferring their Shipping as long as they please.

Humbly Offer'd to the PARLIAMENT.

THE Life of Trade depends upon an equal Encouragement to all Persons that are Instruments of its Promotion: And the Variety of Circumstances that make an Odds in Buying and Selling (the tender part of Trade) are so many, that nothing but a Publick Market can make an equal Ballance, where alone the Buyer and Seller are upon equal Ground. The Buildings of *Blackwell-Hall* (fairly accommodated to Trade) are now become no more (for the most part in Merchants Cloth) than a Reception to collect a Duty out of the Cloth, and then sent by Factors and others into private Houses for a Sale, and the Maker become an unconcern'd Person in the Sale of his own Goods, scarce a Merchant appearing at this publick Market.

The Hardships upon the Clothiers from this Alteration, which is about twenty or thirty Years, are chiefly these:

1. He can never know what Quantities of Cloth of any sort is upon Hand to be sold, which is a great light for his Government in holding up the Price of his Goods; whilst the Merchants and Packers are well enough conversant in this Point: Nay, the Packers many times magnifie their Stock of Cloth, to give the Merchants Encouragement to come and buy from the greater Choice; as hath been manifest from many Instances; which is hard upon the Maker.

2. Hereby the Merchants have their Parcels of Cloth laid up by the Packers against a Shipping, which remain upon the Clothiers Account, thereby beating down the Price in little Parcels to support the Work-people; and when the Shipping come, the whole Parcel sold off at that Price, and not the least Advance made by the Merchant: Whereas, was so great Quantities of Cloth bought by many Hands in the Publick Market, it would necessarily make some Advance upon Cloth, and our Monied Merchants, to gain that Advantage, would always be a buying before-hand.

3. The Packer and Factor, to accommodate the Merchant, hath brought on a long Credit with Cloth; and the Packer being under other Obligations, is always very tender of pressing the Merchant for Payment, if his Conditions are not performed: Neither, indeed, is he a fit Person to be employed in the Sale of Cloth for a Clothier, having a nearer Interest of his own to prefer.

4. The Packer being a Buyer of Cloth himself against a Shipping, is always a beating down the Price upon the Clothier, for his own Advantage; and the best Opportunities for Sales before will be reserved for his own Goods, if not put off by a better Sortment of the Clothier's.

5. Hereby the Merchant having Opportunity to buy Cloth upon any day of the Week, the Clothier hath no Dispatch in his Business, but remains twice as long in Town as in former days, when no Cloth was to be had at the first-hand, but at the publick Market, upon the usual Market-days; which kept the Merchant to a Dispatch with the Clothier.

The Consequences of which hath been, that the Price of Cloth hath been beat down a third part, the Prices of Wages in the Country many times from Nine-pence to Six-pence; besides many Hardships to the poor Labourers, in putting Commodities upon them above the real Value. How far this Management hath affected the Country-Gentleman's Estate, he is now to make a Judgment.

The Practice of our *Turkey-Merchants*, for many Years past, in deferring their Shippings above two Years at a time, being added to this, (which was eminently made out by some of their own Members,) doth sufficiently illustrate the low Prices of Wooll, and the Poverty of the Country.

The Packers who have been intrusted with the Sale of the Clothiers Cloth, without per-adventure were true to the Merchants Interest, otherwise they had never appeared so vigorous to support their Practice: And this being evidently so, the Politick Timing of their Shipping, hath easily procured Cloth upon their own Terms. In the Year 1675. the Clothiers Petitioned the Parliament against this Grievance, and it was then resolved, That the *Turkey Merchants* should send Ships with the Woollen-Manufactures twice a Year to their respective Factories: But the Order being not brought into a Law, through the rising of the Parliament, it was soon forgot, and worse Practices used in that kind since that time than was before, which we hope will now be redress'd by this Bill.

But our Merchants and Packers now give out, that they will ruin the Clothiers of those Counties that are the Promoters of this Bill, by getting some particular Counties excepted, a greater Kindness than the Clothiers themselves desired; And in order hereto, they have procured a Letter, from some few Clothiers of *Oxfordshire*, to their Members, to desire the same, which would be very unreasonable, in that they are but one days Journey distant from this publick Market, and most other Counties above two. The next Exception is *Suffolk Cloth*, which hath been always sold at *Leaden-hall-Market*, and is no way affected by this Bill; as also *Tork-shire*, when the Cloth of that County is Ship'd off at *Hull*, and none brought to *London* but what is bought in the Country, which is provided for in the Bill. The whole of which we humbly submit to the Impartial Justice of this Honourable House.